RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Forms of Experience: Paintings and Literature in the selected novels of Iris Murdoch.

For Registration to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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I. Topic/ Tentative Title

Forms of Experience: Paintings and Literature in the selected novels of Iris Murdoch.

II. Introduction

- **Background :** Jerzy Kosinki, a polish novelist, remarked, "The principles of true art is not to portray but to evoke". The words form a foundational framework to this study as paintings hold an infinite amount of power to make us find or lose ourselves in. Since the 18th century, scholars have broadened the approach on art and aesthetics; they separated aesthetics and philosophy of art, claiming that the former is a 'study of beauty' whilst the latter is the 'study of works' of art. Interestingly, Aesthetics encompasses an understanding of beauty as well as art. The term 'Aesthetics', coined in 18th century by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, in this definition was expressed with the series of articles on "The Pleasures of the Imagination" by Joseph Addison for Spectator magazine in 1712. He chose "Aesthetics" to put emphasis on art as a means of knowledge.

  Critical study of literary works constitutes a diverse class of scholars, but interpretations of other works of art such as paintings, vary even more. If reading a literary text includes its paraphrasing or explanation of a particular context stating a broad theme while interpreting a painting might point out or reveal diverse sources of light in a shadow. An interplay of colours symbolizes the theme or an answer to certain spacial perspectives of a theme. Interpretations, then may state, imply or express how the parts fit or contrast with other elements in a work, or how the

works relate to others in a genre or tradition. Some critics have argued that interpretation falls between description and evaluation as ‘evaluation’ depends on interpretation. Arthur Danto has argued that visual art must be interpreted in order to be work of art, since there may possibly be physically indistinguishable objects that are not art though in paintings there appears to be elements that can be described without being or needing to be interpreted as they do speak a very diverse language of communication.

Though not very widely celebrated in the novels, poets have often found inspiration in paintings and different forms of art. Jean H. Hagstrums’ The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray (1958) was crucial in suggesting the intimate (and sometimes troubled) relationship between poetry and painting.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood where their intention was to reform art by rejecting what it considered the mechanistic approach first adopted by Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo.

An interpretation of art as "Art for art's sake" as a French slogan also raised in 19th century, and expresses a philosophy that the intrinsic value of art, and the only "true" art, is divorced from any moral and utilitarian attribute, although this perception was popularly criticized.

This study digs deeper into the correlation of art and reality as expressed in various literary works of Iris Murdoch. Her fiction beautifully transforms the paintings to reality through the portrayal of her characters and their strong personalities by means of the paintings she has selected, which truly gives a new perspective and voice to them, in respect to the times she was writing in and also the socio-cultural behaviour and psychology she presented in her works.

Iris Murdoch was highly influenced by the works of art, especially paintings, which one can assume from her major works, as she has repeatedly used and mentioned art in many different forms, whether it is her most celebrated novel 'Under the Net' or other literary masterpieces such as ‘The Bell',' The Sandcastle', ‘The Nice and the good' and 'Henry and Cato', Murdoch has always found a way to express her love for Aesthetics. Murdoch’s passion for art can be traced by the different paintings she has chosen for her various novels, such as the paintings in 'The Bell' and 'The Nice and the Good' by famous painters like Galsworthy & Bronzino who were inferred as 'Mannerist' painters as their paintings reflected the movement at the time called 'Mannerism Movement' which was also known as late-Renaissance. The movement was popularised in the 1520's highly influenced by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Michaelangelo.

The study furthermore also highlights the post-impressionism era towards the end of 19th century which composed of critics who were dissatisfied with what they felt was the triviality of subject matter and the loss of structure in Impressionist paintings. Post-impressionist paintings showcased their unique, colourful yet distinctive styles and their subjective perceptions of the world around them, which pioneered a new approach to painting at the turn of the century.

Henceforth, art movements have no longer been unified by a single strand of aesthetic approach but with the exploration and expression of symbolics.

Murdoch’s contemporaries like Virginia Woolf & Joseph Conrad were highly influenced by "Post-Impressionists" and taking inspiration from that, Woolf developed her 'Stream of Consciousness' technique.

Structure, order and the optical effects of colour dominated the aesthetic vision of post-impressionists as rather than relying solely on their surroundings, they relied upon the interrelations of colour and shape to describe the world around them.

The movement found it's roots in an era during which a painting transcended its traditional role as a window onto the world and instead became a window into the artist's mind and soul.

Dame Jean Iris Murdochborn in Phibsborough, Dublin, Irelandwas the Irish novelist and philosopher, best known for her novels based on the themes of good and evil, sexual relationships, morality, and the power of the unconscious. Her philosophical writings were influenced by Simone Weil (from whom she borrows the concept of 'attention'), and by Plato, under whose banner she claimed to fight. In re-animating Plato, she gives force to the reality of the Good, and to a sense of the moral life as a pilgrimage from illusion to reality.In 2008, *The Times* ranked Murdoch twelfth on a list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945". Harold Bloom wrote in his 1986 review of *The Good Apprentice* that no other contemporary British novelist seemed of her 'eminence' and that she would be remembered for years to come.

• Research Problem:

Literature is a complex stream of communication where each individual has a different perspective, and they read each literary work through the eyes of their own experiences. Art is no different, therefore, when one attempts to mark out the events which are directly or passively influenced by literature and art or even a minute semblance, the effect is unique in each event and vividly visible. Similarly, when we look at paintings as a form of art which has been used extensively in the primary works

selected of Iris Murdoch, it opens a window for the viewer to delve into his/her own experiences of life and acts as a medium for them to escape into a world desirable to them, which is unique to each individual owing to socio-cultural phenomenons and the society they grew up in, creating a myriad of interpretations. Norman Holland in The Dynamics of Literary Response (1968) proposed that readers use literary texts to fulfill their fantasies when the 'skilled reader' gives immense meaning to literary works by making a web of connections between all parts of the text. These connections often correlate to the secret fears and desires of the reader. As Holland puts it in his 1979 essay 'Reading an Identity'; Expectation is 'putting the literary work in the sequence of a person's wishes in time'. He explains that every reader has a 'core' identity that generates a particular kind of reading when it interacts with the text. He further expresses this concept as he adds that readers respond to literature in terms of their own personality and perception. Furthermore, the living conditions, upbringing and the society differs massively in different parts of the world, which leads us to the problematic scenario where it is difficult to grasp the thinking and ideologies of women across cultures. When Iris Murdoch wrote her novels, the Asian countries held a draconian attitude towards women and the European nations were working towards better social conditions of women. As the modern era progressed it made the world more inquisitive and aware of the developments across the globe, a period of transition, wide changes, from religious, moral to scientific beliefs, leading to new-age modern problems the world had not witnessed before. The thesis proposed to study how she has used paintings to reflect on these problems of the modern era.

- **Working Definition of Terms:**

--- Psycho Feminism/ Feminist Psychology: It is a form of psychology centered on social structures and gender. Feminist psychology critiques historical psychological research as done from a male perspective with the view that males are the norm. Feminist psychology is oriented to the values and principles of feminism.

--- **Self:** A person with his or her own reflective conscience

--- Subjectivity: Subjectivity refers to how one's judgement is shaped by personal opinions and feelings instead of outside influences.

---**Morality:** The conscious judgement of "who should I be?" and "What sort of life is best for me?" Identifying the significance of the inner, of emotion and perception.

---**Actual life and imaginative life:** Actual life is the current state in which an individual is an imaginative life is when the person transcends beyond one's actual self to be someone else entirely which he/she always wanted to be.

---**Society and social**: An individual's place and strata in the social structure and were they place themselves or the group they belong to.

---**Identity:** A person's knowledge/awareness of themselves without trying to be someone else to please the other.

---Space: Refers to the literary space which the characters needs to grow in respect of his/her personality weather its psychologically or physically, space sometimes metaphorically adopts meanings of relations in the modeled world-structure, that are themselves not spatial at all.

—Heterotopia (Space): The concept coined by philosopher Michael Foucault describes certain cultural and institutional spaces that are somehow 'other', disturbing, intense, incompatible, contradictory or transforming, heterotopias are worlds within worlds, mirroring and yet upsetting what is outside.

—Gaze: A steady intent look for a longer period of time, can be in admiration, surprise or thought.

III. Review of Literature

Listed henceforth are the literary works that have aided the in-depth understanding of how paintings have influenced the literature in the early 19th century and onwards.

Adorno,Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory. Athlon Contemporary European Thinkers,1984.*TranslatedIntroduction by Kentor, Hullet-Robert. Edited by Adorno, Gretel. Tiedemann, Rolf.

In his book Theodor Adorno talks about how aesthetics has become dissatisfied with itself and tried to escape its externality it has almost always taken the form of pretending to be art in a pictorial, effusive voice, or it has offered to act as maitre d' to a specialized domain of pleasure, he furthermore states that, the sacrifice of subjectivity to what is beyond itself. If the thing-in-itself is to speak, subjectivity's own voice must only interfere. According to him, the definition of art is at every point indicated by what art once was, but it is legitimated only by what art became with regard to what it wants to, and perhaps can, become. In a broad sense, aesthetic identity seeks to aid the non- identical, which in reality is repressed by reality's compulsion to identity.

This review helped me to understand that art is not a still object and it keeps on changing forms, it’s always open to perspective and interpretation.

Bove, K. Cheryl. “Understanding Iris Murdoch”.University of South California Press, 2011.

We infer Bove's description of Murdoch as one preoccupied with love, art, and the possibility and difficulty of doing good and avoiding evil and describes Murdoch as a writer who has produced consistently readable novels who fashions gripping narratives and vivid characters.Furthermore, She observes that Murdoch presents readers with moral problems upon which sheallows her audience to pass judgement which is further concluded by her summarization ofMurdoch's work, not as an effort to advance a cause, expands a philosophy, or portrays society,but to present human relationships and solve fictional problems of plot and theme.

This particular review made me aware of Iris Murdoch's writing style and which themes she has used predominantly for her work.

Broackes, Justin. *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher: A Collection Of Essays,* Oxford University Press, 2012.

A Collection of Essays Justin Broackes comments that Murdoch was a philosopher who wrote novels, not a novelist who taught or had taught philosophy. He writes that her work in moral philosophy was important, difficult and distinctive. Murdoch proposed a form of moral realism, allowing the world to contain such things as the courage of an individual or the meanness of something like 'moral facts'. He furthermore observes that Murdoch combines moral psychology and a conception of training in the virtues with theories of Plato, surprisingly perhaps for a kind of moral realism.Justin concludes that Murdoch was also a great believer in historical and individual differences in moral perception and conception.

The essay shed light on Murdoch as a philosopher and her own unique thoughts on morality which helped the research to get a clear idea of the themes Murdoch used in most of her works.

Byatt, A.S.*Degrees of Freedom: The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch*. Vintage Publishers, 1994.

She remarks ‘The Sandcastle’ as a woman’s novelette, with Rain Carter being sort of adream idealization of a young woman, where Mor believes as an artist, our version of otherhuman beings is corrupted by our needs to interpret them by what we are ourselves and to painthuman beings at all is to lack reverence for God in them.‘The Bell’, as opposed to the ‘The Sandcastle’, is a novel which has the solid life the Murdoch praises in the great nineteenth-century novels. Byatt later talks about how ‘The Nice and The Good’ is much more simply concerned with the pleasure and pains of sexual love than Iris’s immediate predecessors and the characters are more or less struggling to distinguish ‘The Nice’ from ‘The Good’ – the kind of objective and unselfish love which is not natural to human beings, the aesthetic center to which is Bronzino’spainting of Venus.

Byatt’s extensive research on Murdoch helped me to know her personality and connected her as an individual to her novels on which the author gave great insights.

Flaxman, Rhoda L. "*Art and Literature*.": A Forum on Fiction, vol. 20, no. 3, 1987. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1345681.

According to Rhoda Flaxman in her essay *Art and Literature*, Art and literature have such a relationship which has fascinated philosophers and critics for centuries. In her novel, the defining spirit from the stated segment of the time period and encyclopedic approaches have been debunked; Flaxman further believes that Visual arts can be decorative, biographical, ideological and interpretive.

This collection of essays explained the relationship between art and literature and presented me with seamless similarities as well as differences between the two.

Fry, Roger. "An Essay in Aesthetics". *New Quarterly*, 1909. reprinted in Vision and Design,1920.

In the essay by Roger Fry, published in New Quarterly, 1909. According to him, the art of painting is the art of imitating solid objects upon a flat surface by means of pigments. He then goes on to compare painting or art with the frame of the mirror that does to some extent turn the reflected scene from one that belongs to our actual life into one that belongs rather to the imaginative life. He concludes these arguments with the thought that the work of art is intimately connected with the secondary imaginative life, which all men live to a greater or less extent and art is the expression of the imaginative life. Fry in the later pages of his easy states that, Morality, appreciate emotion by the standard of resultant action and Art appreciates the emotion in and for itself. He included that Tolstoy calls art the means of communicating emotions. He thus advises to give up the attempt to judge the work of art by its reaction.

Fry's essay gave my research a new outlook and perspective to,ponder on the notions of 'secondary self' and a mirror as an object as well as a reflection to ourselves and helped me understand the role of paintings in my selected novels.

Lee,W.Rensselaer. *Ut PicturaPoesis: The Humanistic Theory Of Painting*. The Art Bulletin. Volume-22, Issue 4, 1940.

In the essay, Lee discusses that treatises on art and literature written between the middle of the sixteenth and middle of the eighteenth century nearly always remark on the close relationship between painting and

poetry. The sister arts as they were generally called—and Lomazzo observes that they arrived at a single birth. Lee takes into account Horace's famous simile *utpicturapoesis*—as is painting so is poetry which the writers on art expected one to read "as is poetry so is painting".

The following essay determined the roots of painting and literature and helped my research to get a firm background on art and its relation to literature.

Levenson, Michael. "Iris Murdoch: The Philosophic Fifties And 'The Bell.'" *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2001.

Murdoch frequently makes reference to the "current view" in her early writings, by which she indicates new norms of thought. As someone trained in methods of linguistic philosophy and inhabiting its capital in Oxford she knew what the 'current view' allowed one to see, she holds the belief that a proper modern philosophy would discard the inner theater and establish itself on the secure basis of the visible world: The overt world of speech, gesture, and physical action.

The article on Murdoch determined her views on the "current views" and what she thought of 'modernity' as a whole , which gave me insights into the period she was writing in.

Mattick, Paul. *Art in It's Time: Theories and practices of modern aesthetics*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

In his book, Paul Mattick comments that art transcends its historical moment and they are both connected to each other. Taking the Importance and significance of the Museum he states that unites products from all epochs and areas;represented by museums and the museum

creates an independent universe for art, away from hustle and bustle of modern life.

Mattic's novel helped the research to get insight into the importance of a museum as a private space which Murdoch has frequently used in her novels.

Punja, P.P. *The Novels of Iris Murdoch: A Critical Study.* ABS Publishers, 1993.

P.P.Punja remarks that Iris Murdoch was a true humanistic by the spirit that makes her a writer of the humanistic approach. She infers that Iris knows the ruling power of relentlessness of practical world over humanity and Individuality as Iris was a humanistic free-will writer who wants to moderate her characters having the uniqueness of the whole personage in place of one aspect. She finds and explores Iris's thirst to seek the importance of human goodness in society by exploring human behaviors, feelings, temperaments, deeds, needs, and choices to establish humanity in the realm of the less humanistic world.Punja's book gave the research an outlook on humanistic behavior in Murdoch's novels and how she wants to bring out the 'goodness' of her characters into the novels which helped developed a chapter sketch for the protagonists.

IV: Justification & Relevance:

The study will be an opportunity to explore 'Aesthetics' in prose as it has mainly been explored in poetry. This Thesis will further contribute to the field of research as it explores paintings and it's effects on the modern era charactersof the primary works selected. It will explain how Iris Murdoch has used uniquely used paintingsinthe selected works other than any other form as a solution to the problems faced by her characters which is supported by the major ideas and theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacque

Derrida. This thesis will justify the paintings as an influencer and its major contributions to the writing style at the time.

It will also shed light on some important artistic movements that later became the author's inspiration to choose a specific form of art i.e. paintings. This study will examine the selected works of Iris Murdoch, explainingthe chaotic' Modern era' and art as a resolution.

V: Objectives

The research aims:

- To study art as a medium to find oneself and explore beyond our psychological boundaries.
- To explore the different movements in arts and aesthetics that shaped society and the writings that focused on them.
- To examine paintings as the true art form that can cause a paradigm shift in the way we perceive them.
- To throw some light on the views of Plato and Freud on art/paintings..
- To define the ‘modern era’, paintings and the big role they are playing in shaping some characteristics of modern time.
- To read about Murdoch’s inclination to work on paintings leaving all the aesthetics behind.
- To analyse the purpose of Murdoch’s preference of female protagonists to ponder over this thought and notion.
- To scrutinize if she a ‘feminist’ or is denoting something entirely different.
- To debunk if the women in Murdoch’s novel is an object or a subject, their notion of being “free” and their ability to express themselves.
- To explain the socio-cultural conditions of women during Murdoch’s era and its role in shaping and portraying the characters.

- To attempt to go in the depths on the concept of 'morality' according to the characters and also the writer.
- To explore the descent of the characters 'secondary self' and their shift from Evil to Good and vice versa.
- To examine the change from the state of disorder to order in the lives of Murdoch's characters when art becomes a primary object for some and resolution for others.

VI: Hypothesis

Paintings, the most ancient form of art, from the beginning of time, have never failed to grasp human attention, and to influence the mind, they are a form of expression which can seldom be viewed as just art, because there's always the dimension of reality attached to it. Art, although always involves the transference of knowledge; It can be a window to another world, or it can be a mirror image to ourselves. Paintings always move beyond being an object of pleasure and give us an inquisitive approach to life, they give us matter to ponder upon as they are the most effective tool of the visualization of all thing's; material or immaterial. Paintings give an ability to the gazer where they put their mind over matter. Hence, museums often become an important place of one's self discovery as their privacy can leave one to enter a state of oneness with the painting they gaze at, as, "in that gaze it is not just the object of knowledge which is constructed but also the knower(Michel Foucault)". Museums are also the quiet story tellers of history, which is probably why Foucault linked museums to "slices of time (also the fourth principle of heterotopia in 'Of Other Spaces')" and proposed the idea of accumulating time indefinitely in an immobile place including museums and libraries.

This study hypothesizes the intertwined relationship between forms of experiences – of art and life. The relationship between them are a form of expressions which can seldom be viewed as just art, because there's always the dimension of reality attached to it. It will also justify that paintings can be a window to another world, or it can be a mirror image to ourselves, for us to ponder over our existence and question our being and purpose in life , which was a theme frequently occurring in the post 19th century literature , keeping that in mind, Paul Gauguin; A French post-impressionist artist made a painting "Where do we come from? What are we? And Where are we going?", which, if we think about, are answers we seek all our lives since we seek stillness, perspective and solemnity, and, from as far as history can tell, we as a civilization have a frustrated longing to create better societies, the building blocks of which, are more self-aware individuals. The study emphasizes on the effect of paintings on our decision-making process, and the role paintings play as one of the most powerful influencers of human life, being an effective tool of visualization. In testing the hypothesis, the selected works of Iris Murdoch will be analyzed for the socio-cultural and psychological insights through her perspective. The thesis will include a close reading of the selected works of Murdoch and references to secondary sources which are in direct correlation to the related area of study, into the thesis.

VII. Methodology

The methods of conducting this research vis-a-vis methodology align themselves somewhere on the banks of a thorough understanding of the matter chosen to study, whilst making comparisons between different perspectives of the different sources or pointing out their highlights. Various books, articles, journals and clippings onhuman sensibilities and

relationships, psychology, sociology, feminism andtechniques of painting will be considered to study different movementsand their impact on the socio-cultural era. The findings will be supported with a significant number of theories such as of Psycho-feminism, Theory of gaze, Deconstruction of Art, Thing theory, Literary Space theory and the concept of Heterotropiain context of the eras for an in-depth study of the selected works.

VIII. Tentative Chapter Plan

Chap. 1- Introduction: Paintings and Literature, 'The First Stroke'

This chapter introduces the readers to Murdoch's inclination to choose paintings as the form of art along with the emphasis on interpreting the idea of 'art' as propounded by Roger Fry in his essay "An Essay in Aesthetics". It will further detail the concept of 'Literary Space' proposed by Paul Mattick and the significance of privacy in a museum.We will also study the contemporary painters of the era, their paintings, brush techniques, their influence on literature, and modern era.

Chap. 2- Museum – A Heterotopia

The second chapter highlights the importance of a museum that Murdoch has expressed in two of her major works. It also explores the idea of museum as a 'heterotopic space'as coined by French philosopher Michel Foucault in his essay'Of Other Spaces' wherein they're seen as the expressions of an individual choice. This chapter thoroughly investigates the aspect ofmuseums as living spaces, where the works of artists live from time immemorial to the future to come. The space provided by them is without borders where geographical boundaries are non-existent and forms of art from all walks of lifecome together.Museums are

psychological lighthouses that calm aggravated hearts and lead them to stillness, perspective and solemnity in an angry chaotic world.

Chap. 3- Art, Values and the notion of Freedom:

The third chapter focuses on the influence ofart,the emotional state of its characters and theirpersonality.The chapter will showcase the constant stream of values and ideologies unique to each observer, emanated by all forms of art. We study their influence on the disrupted perception of humanity,becauseof one's impression of important art and the tendency of an individual to deviate from their prior course of actions after finding new meanings in life.It also explores the idea of an individual's 'subjectivity' of free will and moves around the prominent views of Iris Murdoch on moral obligations and decision-making, the two defining factors of what is good and what isn't.

Chap. 4- Paintings: Socio-cultural influences

This chapter makes the psychological study of the characters once they come under the influence ofpaintings. They're pictured content with their impression, but has art helped them reach a conclusion and resolution to their complex issues, and actually imbibed a sense of completion to their thought process? Or, is art nothing but a form of escape from everything else, a diversion, from the outside world, as they find themselves lost in the intricacies of the painters' work. This chapter intends to explain whether the characters have lost themselves in the journey of escape in search of a haven or have landed in the same chaotic world with their own perceptions.

Chap. 5- Conclusion: 'The Final Stroke'

The final chapter reads into the contrasting thoughts outlined in the author's works through her words and ideology. It exposes the authors' strong portrayal of art as a mode to express her thoughts through paintings as an object. The concluding chapterwill summarize how paintings play a big role in creating the idea of 'self'.It will also conclude the relationship between art and life, the form of experiences and will shed light on on the similarities between them as they are also; form of expressions which can seldom be viewed as just art, but with the dimension of reality attached to it. It will also summarize that paintings can be a window to another world, as well as being a mirror image to ourselves, for us to ponder over our existence and question our being and purpose in life described and explored my Murdoch in her novels.

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